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REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL
Substantive session of 1994
Agenda item 10
NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

Report of the open-ended working group on the review of arrangements for consultations with non-governmental organizations

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I. ORGANIZATION OF THE SESSION

A. Opening and duration of the session

1. The Open-ended Working Group on the Review of Arrangements for Consultations with Non-Governmental Organizations held its first session from 20 to 23 June 1994, in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1993/80 of 30 July 1993. The Working Group held six meetings.

B. Agenda and organization of work

2. At its first meeting, on 20 June 1994, the Working Group considered its provisional agenda, contained in document E/AC.70/1994/2, which had been approved by the Working Group at its organizational session, and which read as follows:

1. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work.

2. Accreditation of non-governmental organizations to participate in the work of the Working Group.

3. General review of arrangements for consultations with non-governmental organizations.

4. Examination of ways and means of improving practical arrangements for the work of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations and the Non-Governmental Organizations Unit of the Secretariat.

5. Adoption of the report of the Working Group on its first session.

3. Before the adoption of the provisional agenda, the Chairman, in his introductory statement, proposed that at its first session the Working Group should focus on agenda item 3, "General review of arrangements for consultations with non-governmental organizations". The programme of work for the first session would consist of several meetings devoted to a general debate and thematic discussions on the following issues:

(a) Issues arising from experience in the implementation of Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV) of 23 May 1968;

(b) Review of the categories of status of non-governmental organizations;

(c) Consultative arrangements and accreditation to United Nations world conferences;

(d) Experience gained from the Commission on Sustainable Development;

(e) Problems and bottlenecks faced by non-governmental organizations under the present arrangements.

The Chairman would prepare a summary of the debate and the thematic discussions, which would be included in the report of the Working Group on its first session. At its next session, the Working Group would focus on agenda item 4, "Examination of ways and means of improving practical arrangements for the work of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations and the Non-Governmental Organizations Unit of the Secretariat".

4. At the same meeting, the Working Group adopted the provisional agenda, and approved the organization of work of the session as presented by the Chairman of the Working Group.

C. Adoption of the draft report of the Working Group on its organizational session

5. At its 1st meeting, on 20 June 1994, the Working Group had before it for its consideration the draft report of the Working Group on its organizational session, contained in document E/AC.70/1994/3.

6. At the same meeting, the Working Group adopted the draft report.

D. Documentation

7. The Working Group had before it the following documents:

(a) Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Working with non-governmental organizations: operational activities for development of the United Nations system with non-governmental organizations and Governments at the grass-roots and national levels" and the comments of the Administrative Committee on Coordination thereon (A/49/122-E/1994/44 and Add.1);

(b) Annotated provisional agenda (E/AC.70/1994/2);

(c) Report of the Open-ended Working Group on the Review of Arrangements for Consultations with Non-Governmental Organizations on its organizational session (E/AC.70/1994/3);

(d) Report of the Secretary-General on the accreditation of non-governmental organizations to participate in the work of the Working Group (E/AC.70/1994/4);

(e) Report of the Secretary-General on the general review of arrangements for consultations with non-governmental organizations (E/AC.70/1994/5 and Add.1);

(f) Statement submitted by the World Federation of United Nations Associations, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, category I (E/AC.70/1994/NGO/1);

(g) Statement submitted by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, category I (E/AC.70/1994/NGO/2);

(h) Statement submitted by the International Council of Jewish Women, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, category II (E/AC.70/1994/NGO/3);

(i) Statement submitted by the International Chamber of Commerce, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, category I (E/AC.70/1994/NGO/4);

(j) Statement submitted by the International Federation of Associations of the Elderly, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, category I (E/AC.70/1994/NGO/5);

(k) Statement submitted by the International Social Service, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, category II, on behalf of the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations (E/AC.70/1994/NGO/6);

(l) Statement submitted by ActionAid, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, category II (E/AC.70/1994/NGO/7);

(m) Statement submitted by the World Young Women's Christian Association, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, category II (E/AC.70/1994/NGO/8);

(n) Statement submitted by the International Council of Women, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, category I (E/AC.70/1994/NGO/9);

(o) Statement submitted by Soroptimist International, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, category I (E/AC.70/1994/NGO/10);

(p) Statement submitted by the International Federation of Business and Professional Women, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, category I (E/AC.70/1994/NGO/11).

E. Participation

8. Representatives of the following States attended: Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Cyprus, Denmark, Ecuador, Egypt, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, India, Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Lithuania, Malawi, Malaysia, Mali, Mauritania, Mexico, Morocco, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Russian Federation, Senegal, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Sweden,

Syrian Arab Republic, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Viet Nam and Zambia.

9. The following United Nations organs and bodies were represented: United Nations Children's Fund, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Population Fund, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, New York Office of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme and New York Office of the Centre for Human Rights.

10. The following specialized agency was represented: International Labour Organization.

11. The following non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council participated in the session: American Association of Retired Persons, Amnesty International, Baha'i International Community, Center of Concern, Coordinating Board of Jewish Organizations, Friends World Committee for Consultation, Human Rights Internet, International Agency for Rural Industrialization, International Association for Volunteer Effort, International Association of Ports and Harbours, International Chamber of Commerce, International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, International Council of Jewish Women, International Federation of Agricultural Producers, International Federation of Associations of the Elderly, International Federation of Human Rights, International Federation of Settlements and Neighbourhood Centres, International Fellowship of Reconciliation, International Juridical Organization, International League for Human Rights, International Movement ATD Fourth World, International Movement for Fraternal Union among Races and Peoples, International Social Service, International Union of Family Organizations, Inter-Parliamentary Union, Inter-Press Service International Cooperative, Law Association for Asia and the Pacific, Lawyers' Committee for Human Rights, Lutheran World Federation, Muslim World League, Pan-Pacific and South-East Asia Women's Association, Population Communications - International, Rotary International, Service, Justice and Peace in Latin America, Society for International Development, Soroptimist International, Women's Environment and Development Organization, World Conference on Religion and Peace, World Federalist Movement, World Federation of Engineering Organizations, World Federation of United Nations Associations, World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations, World Veterans Federation, World Young Women's Christian Association and Zonta International.

12. The following non-governmental organizations in consultative status with specialized agencies participated in the session: International Society of Biometeorology and International Union Against the Venereal Diseases and the Treponematoses.

13. The following non-governmental organizations on the roster of the Commission on Sustainable Development participated in the session: Australian Conservation Foundation, Center for Development of International Law, Communications Coordination Committee for the United Nations, Country Women Association of Nigeria, Cousteau Society Inc., Environnement et Developpement du Tiers-monde (ENDA), Franciscans International, International Synergy Institute, Japan Fisheries Association, Pan African Movement, United Nations Association of America and World Sustainable Agriculture Association.

14. The following non-governmental organizations accredited for participation in United Nations conferences and/or their preparatory process participated in the session: Eagle Forum, International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development, NOVIB - Netherlands Organization for International Development Cooperation and World Sikh Organization.

II. ACCREDITATION OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE WORK OF THE WORKING GROUP

A. Introduction

15. The Working Group considered agenda item 2, "Accreditation of non-governmental organizations to participate in the work of the Working Group", at its 1st and 4th meetings, on 20 and 21 June 1994.

16. For its consideration of the item, the Working Group had before it the report of the Secretary-General on the accreditation of non-governmental organizations to participate in the work of the Working Group (E/AC.70/1994/4), the annex to which contained a list of non-governmental organizations that did not fall under any of the categories enumerated in paragraph 2 of the annex to Economic and Social Council resolution 1993/80 of 30 July 1993.

17. At the 1st meeting, on 20 June 1994, statements were made by the representatives of Cuba, Costa Rica, India, Ireland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Canada and the United States of America.

18. At the same meeting, the Working Group approved the list of organizations contained in the annex to document E/AC.70/1994/4.

19. At the 4th meeting, on 21 June 1994, a statement was made by the representative of India.

B. Summary of general discussion

20. One delegation expressed serious reservations on the participation of the World Sikh Organization in the Working Group, and stated that organizations indulging in terrorism to undermine the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States were clearly violating the Charter of the United Nations, in letter and spirit, and Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV). The delegation said that, in its view, the Working Group should have had the opportunity to examine the credentials of non-governmental organizations accredited to it afresh, to see whether any of them had come to adverse notice, while keeping Council resolution 1296 (XLIV) as a constant point of reference. The same delegation stated that participation of non-governmental organizations whose objectives were inconsistent with the principles and purposes of the Charter would erode the credibility of the non-governmental system as a whole and cause apprehensions among Member States.

21. A number of delegations expressed the view that no decision of the Working Group was required on the accreditation of non-governmental organizations that

were covered by the provisions of paragraph 2 of the annex to Economic and Social Council resolution 1993/80.

III. GENERAL REVIEW OF THE ARRANGEMENTS FOR CONSULTATIONS WITH NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

A. Introduction

22. At its 1st to 5th meetings, from 20 to 22 June 1994, the Working Group considered item 3 of its agenda. It had before it the following documents:

(a) Report of the Secretary-General on the general review of arrangements for consultations with non-governmental organizations (E/AC.70/1994/5);

(b) Report of the Secretary-General on the participation of non-governmental organizations in the Commission on Human Rights, the World Conference on Human Rights and the human rights treaty bodies (E/AC.70/1994/5/Add.1).

23. At its 1st meeting, on 20 June 1994, the Working Group heard an introductory statement by the Director of the Division for Policy Coordination and Economic and Social Council Affairs of the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development of the United Nations Secretariat.

24. At the same meeting, statements were made by the representatives of Greece (on behalf of the States Members of the United Nations that are members of the European Union), Austria, Cuba and Chile.

25. At the same meeting, the representative of the United Nations Children's Fund made a statement.

26. Also at the same meeting, representatives of the following non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, category I, made statements: Rotary International and Society for International Development.

27. At the 2nd meeting, on 20 June 1994, statements were made by the representatives of the United States of America, Canada and Sweden.

28. At the same meeting, the representative of the United Nations Development Programme made a statement.

29. Also at the same meeting, the representative of the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council made a statement.

30. At the same meeting, statements were made by the representatives of the following non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, category I: International Federation of Agricultural Producers and Soroptimist International.

31. Also at the same meeting, statements were made by the representatives of the following non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, category II: International Federation of Settlements and Neighbourhood Centres, Service, Justice and Peace in Latin America and American Association of Retired Persons.

32. At the same meeting, statements were made by the representatives of the following non-governmental organizations accredited to the Commission on Sustainable Development: Pan African Movement and International Synergy Institute.

33. At the 3rd meeting, on 21 June 1994, statements were made by the representatives of Costa Rica, Peru, Japan, China, India, the Philippines, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Malaysia.

34. Also at the same meeting, statements were made by the representatives of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the United Nations International Drug Control Programme.

35. At the same meeting, statements were made by the representatives of the following non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council: Baha'i International Community and Amnesty International (category II); and Women's Environment and Development Organization (roster).

36. At the same meeting, the representative of the Communications Coordination Committee for the United Nations, a non-governmental organization accredited to the Commission on Sustainable Development, made a statement.

37. At the 4th meeting, on 21 June 1994, statements were made by the representatives of Australia and the Russian Federation.

38. At the same meeting, statements were made by the representatives of the Centre for Human Rights and the United Nations Population Fund.

39. Also at the same meeting, statements were made by the representatives of the following non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council: Muslim World League (category I) and World Federalist Movement and Coordinating Board of Jewish Organizations (category II).

40. Also at the same meeting, the representative of the Australian Conservation Foundation, a non-governmental organization accredited to the Commission on Sustainable Development, made a statement.

41. At the same meeting, the representative of the International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development, a non-governmental organization accredited for participation in United Nations conferences and/or their preparatory process, made a statement.

42. The Working Group then began the discussion on thematic issues under the item and heard statements by the representatives of Ireland, Cuba, Canada and Ecuador.

43. At the same meeting, statements were made by the representatives of the following non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council: World Veterans Federation (category I) and World Federalist Movement (category II).

44. At the same meeting, the Director of the Division for Policy Coordination and Economic and Social Council Affairs of the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development of the United Nations Secretariat made a statement.

45. At its 5th meeting, on 22 June 1994, the Working Group continued the discussion of thematic issues under the item and heard statements by the representatives of China, the Philippines, Canada, Greece (on behalf of the States Members of the United Nations that are members of the European Union), Sweden, Egypt, Cuba, India, Mexico, France, the United States of America, Ecuador, Hungary and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

46. At the same meeting, the Director of the Division for Policy Coordination and Economic and Social Council Affairs, made a statement.

47. At the same meeting, the representative of the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council made a statement.

48. At the same meeting, statements were made by the representatives of the following non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council: Zonta International and Society for International Development (category I) and World Federation of Engineering Organizations (roster).

49. At the same meeting, statements were made by the representatives of the Communications Coordination Committee of the United Nations, the International Synergy Institute, the Australian Conservation Foundation, the Country Women Association of Nigeria and the Pan African Movement, non-governmental organizations accredited to the Commission on Sustainable Development.

B. Summary of general discussion

50. In his opening statement, the Chairman of the Open-ended Working Group, Mr. Jamsheed K. A. Marker (Pakistan), stated that the task of the Working Group was of critical importance as the contribution of non-governmental organizations would enhance the effectiveness of the United Nations at a time when the Organization was searching for a more focused role for itself in development and peace. The task of the Working Group would be essentially a technical one, focusing on the substantive issue of the participation of non-governmental organizations in the work of the United Nations, with a view to ensuring more flexible arrangements in that regard. He emphasized the importance of the

contributions made by non-governmental organizations to the work of the United Nations, especially since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

51. He suggested that the Working Group at its first session focus on item 3 and review the arrangements for consultations with non-governmental organizations, giving particular attention to the following issues:

(a) Issues arising from experience in the implementation of Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV);

(b) Review of the categories of status;

(c) Consultative arrangements and accreditation to United Nations world conferences;

(d) Experience gained from the Commission on Sustainable Development;

(e) Problems and bottlenecks faced by non-governmental organizations under the present arrangements.

52. The Working Group would hold a second session early in 1995 to discuss item 4 and would then draft a negotiated agreement on the future of consultative mechanisms and arrangements.

53. The Director of the Division for Policy Coordination and Economic and Social Council Affairs of the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development introduced the report of the Secretary-General (E/AC.70/1994/5 and Add.1). The report was submitted in response to requests made by the Working Group at its organizational session for information on various aspects of the United Nations consultative relationship with non-governmental organizations. The Secretary-General had decided to submit a single comprehensive report which was both descriptive and analytical. The report thus outlined the contextual framework of the tremendous growth of civil society and its implications for Member States and for the United Nations. An attempt had also been made to identify the issues that the Working Group might wish to consider during the course of its work. Chapter I attempted to provide the contextual background. Chapters II to IV provided specific information on various issues. Chapter VI offered some recommendations and suggestions on issues that the Working Group might wish to discuss. Finally, annexes II to V provided additional information beyond that requested by the Working Group.

54. In his view, some of the basic issues underlying the review were (a) whether the evolution of civil society warranted a fundamental redesigning of the relationship between the United Nations and civil society; (b) an assessment of the extent to which the non-governmental organizations having relationships with the United Nations at present were truly representatives of civil society; (c) whether all non-governmental organizations should have the same rights and privileges regardless of the size of their constituency; and (d) how to ensure a representativity of non-governmental organizations in North/South terms. An examination of those issues might help in determining

whether the Council needed to make adjustments in the present arrangements for consultation with non-governmental organizations.

Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV)

55. Many representatives of Member States noted that the review of arrangements for consultations with non-governmental organizations was timely and necessary, especially in view of recent developments, in order to reflect the current needs and realities. Some were of the view that Council resolution 1296 (XLIV) needed updating to enable an increasing number of non-governmental organizations to participate in United Nations activities while retaining a reasonable filter to exclude those non-governmental organizations whose objectives were incompatible with those of the Charter of the United Nations.

56. One delegation stressed that non-governmental organizations considered for consultative status should strictly adhere to the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations, and that organizations indulging in terrorism to destabilize legitimate Governments should have no place whatsoever in the United Nations system. It suggested that a set of rights and responsibilities and a code of conduct for non-governmental organizations should be considered.

57. A number of representatives of Member States noted that, while the integrity of Council resolution 1296 (XLIV) should be maintained, there should be an endeavour to ensure that the implementation of its provisions would be more expeditious, transparent, flexible and inclusive. One delegation stated that any necessary updating of Council resolution 1296 (XLIV) could be made by means of an additional protocol or an addendum to the resolution.

58. Some delegations believed that the interpretation of Council resolution 1296 (XLIV), relating to the granting, suspension and withdrawal of consultative status, lay within the competence of the Economic and Social Council or the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations, which would present its recommendation on such issues to the Council.

59. One delegation stated that Council resolution 1296 (XLIV) clearly should identify the Council as the competent authority ultimately responsible for decisions on the granting, suspension or withdrawal of the consultative status of non-governmental organizations.

60. One delegation stated that the clear division between non-governmental organizations with consultative status and those affiliated with the Department of Public Information of the United Nations should be maintained.

61. Many non-governmental organizations in consultative status observed that Council resolution 1296 (XLIV) remained a viable basis for arrangements for consultations with non-governmental organizations. If it was revised, however, it should not result in a curtailment of the existing participatory rights of non-governmental organizations which enjoyed consultative status. Some considered, however, that changes might be warranted in order to ensure the involvement of national non-governmental organizations in the work of the United Nations at the national, regional and international levels. In that connection,

some non-governmental organizations wanted to retain the provision that no separate status should be granted to national affiliates of international non-governmental organizations in consultative status.

62. Other non-governmental organizations stressed that the current review should result in a strengthening of the consultative relationship and should not restrict the present participatory rights.

63. In that connection, some non-governmental organizations noted that the new rules, established for the Commission on Sustainable Development, had seriously curtailed the participatory rights of non-governmental organizations in regard to the circulation of written statements as official documents as well as the possibility of oral interventions. Concern was expressed at the recent practice of asking non-governmental organizations to form "coalitions" and "constituencies" and to speak through a spokesperson. Such forced consensus would result in destroying the diversity of opinions. It was suggested that those participatory rights, warranted by Council resolution 1296 (XLIV), be fully reinstated. Other non-governmental organizations, while supporting the restoration of all rights enumerated in Council resolution 1296 (XLIV), also supported the innovative practices and procedures established by the Commission on Sustainable Development, which were designed to achieve an effective transition from conference participation to the full implementation of the outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, especially Agenda 21.

64. The Working Group took note of the decision on major groups passed by the Commission on Sustainable Development, and some explicitly called for its early implementation.

65. Comments as well as suggestions for amendments to specific paragraphs of Council resolution 1296 (XLIV) were also made.

Decentralization at the regional and national levels and broader representation of non-governmental organizations from developing countries

66. A number of representatives of Member States stressed the need for a broader and more diverse participation of non-governmental organizations from developing countries in the consultative relationship. In that regard, several Member States suggested the establishment of a fund to assist the participation of non-governmental organizations from developing countries in United Nations meetings, in particular United Nations conferences and their preparatory meetings. Others, while agreeing that there was a need to facilitate the participation of non-governmental organizations from developing countries, expressed doubts about establishing a trust fund.

67. Several delegations opposed the establishment of a trust fund based on compulsory financial contributions from non-governmental organizations. One delegation suggested that a study should be made of other means of financing that would assure and guarantee the participation of non-governmental

organizations in the work of the United Nations on the basis of equitable geographical distribution.

68. Several delegations emphasized the importance of taking concrete measures to encourage non-governmental organizations from developing countries to participate in the activities of the United Nations.

69. Some delegations suggested that in order to increase the representation of non-governmental organizations from developing countries so as to reflect the principle of equitable geographical distribution, the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations, when considering applications for consultative status, should give priority to those emanating from non-governmental organizations in developing countries.

70. While recognizing that the report should reflect the statements made by several delegations concerning the assurance of equitable geographical distribution, one delegation noted that such a principle did not appear in the Charter of the United Nations.

71. One delegation suggested that measures should be taken to ensure that a certain percentage of non-governmental organizations participating in United Nations conferences were from developing countries. However, several delegations expressed their opposition to the idea of establishing quotas for non-governmental organizations.

72. Some delegations noted the importance of the participation by non-governmental organizations representing indigenous people.

73. One delegation proposed that mention should be made in Council resolution 1296 (XLIV) of non-governmental organizations representing indigenous people.

74. Non-governmental organizations in consultative status stressed the need to strengthen United Nations/non-governmental organization relations at the regional level. The United Nations should encourage and facilitate the participation of regional and national non-governmental organizations in meetings of the regional commissions as well as in regional preparatory meetings for United Nations conferences.

75. One non-governmental organization called for the creation of "umbrella national networks" at the regional and national levels, which would include representatives of the poor, disadvantaged or marginalized sectors, particularly from developing countries. Those "umbrella networks" should be eligible for consultative status.

76. Other non-governmental organizations also stressed the need for a broader representation of non-governmental organizations from developing countries, at the global, regional, national and sub-national grass-roots levels.

77. The need to establish a gender balance was also mentioned.

78. United Nations offices and programmes, describing their own experiences with non-governmental organizations, emphasized the importance of regional and

national non-governmental organizations and especially their role at the policy implementation stage. They expressed the hope that the current review would result in an expansion of the arrangements for consultation and a decentralization at the regional and national levels.

Categories of status

79. Several Member States were of the view that the current categories of consultative status should be retained. It was suggested that new categories, such as "conference status" or "commission status", might be added.

80. The need to incorporate in the consultative process academic institutions as well as business, industry and scientific groups was mentioned.

81. One delegation suggested that the following principles could guide the review: (a) diversity calls for flexibility; (b) specialization should not be penalized; (c) the concept of categories should be discussed separately from the rights of participation; and (d) the concept of non-governmental organizations should be broadened to include major groups, as defined in Agenda 21, and academic and research organizations. That delegation went on to propose one scenario for accommodating those principles in proposing that the present "hierarchical" system of categorization of non-governmental organizations should be revised and perhaps replaced by a system based on the functions and areas of specialization of non-governmental organizations. Such a system could be organized according to two main clusters: the "specialized" group, to be subdivided into (i) academic/research organizations; (ii) major groups as defined in Agenda 21; and (iii) specialized groups, and the "general" group, to be subdivided into "advocacy and information groups" and "international federations".

82. Most non-governmental organizations in consultative status observed that the present classification system should be retained in order to recognize the differences in levels of constituencies and range of activities. If a "functional" system of categories was preferred, care should be taken to find a way to include "service" organizations. Moreover, a "functional" system might be difficult to implement in view of the multidisciplinary nature of most non-governmental organizations' activities.

83. One non-governmental organization suggested that eligibility for consultative status should be extended to "institutions created at the national or regional level but with an international or transnational mandate, working partly with governmental funding but autonomous in character and non-governmental in orientation", on the understanding that such an institution, when applying for consultative status, would have to provide clearly demonstrable proof of its independence from governmental influence.

Extension of the consultative status beyond the Economic and Social Council

84. Many representatives of Member States suggested that consultative arrangements with non-governmental organizations be extended beyond the Economic and Social Council and its bodies in order to encompass the General Assembly and its Main Committees and subsidiary bodies. Several delegations suggested that the Security Council and other bodies dealing with peace, security and disarmament should be encompassed. One delegation suggested that the Bretton Woods institutions should be encompassed as well. One delegation noted, however, that the extension of the consultative relationship beyond the Economic and Social Council was not within the mandate of the Working Group. Suggestions for amendments to specific paragraphs of Council resolution 1296 (XLIV) were made.

85. Non-governmental organizations in consultative status called for an examination of the possibility of extending the consultative relationship to the General Assembly and its Main Committees and to United Nations bodies not related to the Economic and Social Council. They suggested that non-governmental organizations should also be allowed to participate in working groups and drafting groups.

86. Other non-governmental organizations also supported the extension of consultative arrangements, especially to the General Assembly and its Main Committees and the Bretton Woods institutions.

Participation of non-governmental organizations in United Nations conferences

87. Several Member States stressed the need for the adoption of consistent rules for the participation of non-governmental organizations in United Nations conferences, taking into account the need for transparency, diversity and flexibility.

88. One delegation suggested that the model for participation by non-governmental organizations adopted for the International Conference on Population and Development be followed for future conferences.

89. Another delegation stated that the participation of non-governmental organizations in conferences should be decided on a case-by-case basis, and that it was essential to get a "no objection" clearance for this from the States concerned.

90. Many speakers stressed the importance of including non-governmental organizations in national delegations and expressed the hope that the practice would be widely followed.

91. Non-governmental organizations in consultative status also stressed the need for the adoption of standard rules of procedure for the participation of non-governmental organizations in United Nations conferences, which would allow for the participation of non-governmental organizations in consultative status

as well as other non-governmental organizations whose relevance and legitimacy had been established under orderly, transparent and consistent procedures.

Practical measures

Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations

92. Several Member States suggested that the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations should meet more frequently, perhaps on an annual rather than on a biennial basis; it could be opened to a greater participation by the membership of the United Nations and should associate the non-governmental organizations more closely with its work. For example, the Committee could hold a regular dialogue with non-governmental organizations. It was suggested that the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations should be given a broader mandate to consider issues related to non-governmental organizations and to facilitate relations between the United Nations and non-governmental organizations. It was also suggested that the membership of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations be enlarged in order to reflect the increase in membership of the United Nations and also to allow the creation of a working group within the Committee to facilitate the evaluation of requests for consultative status or for reclassification. The need to re-examine the provisions of Council resolution 1296 (XLIV) regarding the submission of quadrennial reports by non-governmental organizations was mentioned. Measures should be taken to expedite the process of application for consultative status and ensure greater transparency in the granting of consultative status.

93. Non-governmental organizations in consultative status and other non-governmental organizations also suggested that the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations should meet more frequently in order to speed up the process of requests for consultative status and reclassification. The need to review the procedures for consideration of quadrennial reports was mentioned.

94. One non-governmental organization suggested that, in order to ensure maximum independence and depoliticization in the screening of applications for status, the Committee should be composed of independent experts.

95. One Member State suggested the establishment of a credentials committee to verify the credentials of representatives of non-governmental organizations, with a view to achieving better representativeness and credibility for non-governmental organizations. Several Member States opposed such a measure as it would add another bureaucratic layer that would further complicate and hamper non-governmental organizations.

96. One delegation stated that, should such a credentials committee be established, there would be a need for participation by Member States on the basis of equitable geographical distribution.

Secretariat support and the Non-Governmental Organizations Unit

97. Several Member States stated that adequate Secretariat support should be provided to ensure a productive non-governmental organization relationship with

the United Nations. In that connection, they called for the strengthening of the Non-Governmental Organizations Unit of the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development in view of the increasing volume of work generated by a growing number of non-governmental organizations in consultative status. They also emphasized the need for coordination between the various Secretariat units dealing with non-governmental organization matters.

98. Several non-governmental organizations in consultative status also called for the strengthening of the Non-Governmental Organizations Unit. It was suggested that administrative and organizational arrangements for non-governmental organization support should be reviewed. It was also suggested that secretariat support should be located in a central position in the Secretariat, perhaps in the Office of the Secretary-General, in order to promote ongoing consultation with the full range of non-governmental organizations, as well as coherence in the treatment of non-governmental organizations on a Secretariat-wide basis.

99. In that connection, several non-governmental organizations in consultative status called for coordination among Secretariat offices and programmes dealing with non-governmental organization matters.

100. The representative of the Secretariat indicated that the bulk of the work relating to non-governmental organizations was carried out in the context of their substantive contributions to the various parts of the United Nations by the relevant substantive units. The Non-Governmental Organizations Unit had recently been strengthened through internal redeployment in response to the concerns expressed by the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations and the Economic and Social Council. A further strengthening of the Unit would require additional resources.

101. In that connection, one Member State observed that the strengthening of the Non-Governmental Organizations Unit and of substantive offices dealing with non-governmental organizations were not mutually exclusive but complementary, since the Unit was the first point of entry in the United Nations for many non-governmental organizations and its strengthening would assist in opening avenues for non-governmental organizations to the appropriate substantive offices. Another Member State observed that the Unit served as the substantive secretariat for the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations, which would require adequate support if it was to be revitalized. One Member State requested more information and better transparency on the accounting, mandate and budget of the Non-Governmental Organizations Unit of the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development, as well as more information on the Unit's relation to the Non-Governmental Liaison Service and its budget and accounting procedures.

102. One Member State suggested that consideration could be given to the rationalization of those units within the Secretariat that worked directly with non-governmental organizations, in particular the Non-Governmental Organizations Unit and the various functions undertaken by the Non-Governmental Liaison Service.

103. Non-governmental organizations accredited to the Commission on Sustainable Development noted that strengthening the practical arrangements for consultations with non-governmental organizations might be as important as reviewing the principles for those arrangements. Principles would remain without results in the absence of adequate practical provisions for their implementation. Thus, there should be a thorough consideration of the adequacy of the resources available to the Secretariat as well as of the extent of the coordination between United Nations offices and programmes dealing with non-governmental organizations.

104. In that connection, it was suggested that consideration be given to proposals for the consolidation of services to non-governmental organizations under an Under-Secretary-General for non-governmental organization relations.

Improvement of channels of communication and information within the United Nations

105. Member States as well as non-governmental organizations and United Nations offices and programmes stressed the need to make full use of electronic communications facilities to provide non-governmental organizations with complete and timely information regarding United Nations activities on a dependable and consistent basis. The need to disseminate United Nations documentation in all appropriate languages was emphasized. Several non-governmental organizations noted the practical difficulties faced by non-governmental organization representatives in obtaining access to and in participating in United Nations meetings and called for measures to redress those difficulties.

106. Non-governmental organizations in consultative status stressed the need to facilitate access by non-governmental organizations to United Nations facilities, including access to the General Assembly and its Main Committees, and to documentation and notification of meetings on a timely basis.

107. They called for the relocation of the Resource Centre within the Secretariat Building, as well as the restoration of some practical facilities, such as the possibility of bringing guests, access to the second floor and the General Assembly Hall, the right to the full use of the United Nations Library, and appropriate seating arrangements. It was stressed that legitimate concerns for security at Headquarters should not result in hampering the participation of non-governmental organizations in United Nations activities.

IV. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP ON ITS FIRST SESSION

108. At its 6th meeting, on 23 June 1994, the Working Group adopted the draft report, as orally amended (E/AC.70/1994/L.2 and Add.1).

ANNEX

Summary by the Chairman

1. We have had a rich and broad-ranging discussion covering practically every aspect of the relationship between the United Nations and non-governmental organizations. Members of the Working Group and the non-governmental organization community welcomed the comprehensive report presented by the Secretary-General. The report was commended for the information and analysis of the historical evolution of the consultative relationship it contained, and also for the contextual framework provided by identifying the role of non-State actors in contemporary society and by suggesting a series of questions and issues for the consideration of the Group.

2. Members of the Working Group as well as the non-governmental organization community will no doubt continue to study the report carefully with a view to addressing at our next session some of the key issues raised in it. The delay in issuance of the report and the changes in the convening of the Working Group unfortunately did not allow all interested non-governmental organizations to participate in our deliberations. This is deeply regretted. It is therefore important that the report of the present session of the Working Group, together with the report of the Secretary-General, are widely disseminated so that all concerned can take them fully into account in preparing for our next session.

3. I think there was a universally shared sentiment in the Working Group about the timeliness and importance of this review on many scores. Not only has a quarter of a century elapsed since the adoption of resolution 1296 (XLIV) of 23 May 1968 by the Economic and Social Council, but soon the United Nations itself will reach its fiftieth year. The world around has changed remarkably during this period and so has the world Organization. On the other hand, not only have non-governmental organizations grown rapidly in number, they have also come to play a vital role in the development of civil society. Today, they are a vibrant, living link in the warp and woof of human society both nationally and at the global level. We must take cognizance of and respond to this important reality.

4. During the course of the general debate and the ensuing thematic discussions, a large number of new ideas, suggestions and proposals were put forward by delegations and non-governmental organization representatives. These will be reflected in our report and deserve our consideration in the course of our future work. The present summary does not, however, attempt to encompass all these. My purpose in summing up our discussions is to facilitate the future work of the Working Group by trying to outline the broad elements on which there seemed to emerge a general agreement, as well as those issues on which a variety of views was expressed. I hope that this will assist members of the Working Group in defining the direction of our future work.

The context

5. There was a broadly shared view that an enhanced relationship between the United Nations and non-governmental organizations should be built, taking into

account the increasingly important role being played by non-State actors in contemporary society. The aim should be not only the dissemination of information and obtaining expert advice from non-governmental organizations but primarily to enhance their contributions to the work of the Organization with a view to furthering the ideals and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations.

Experience with Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV)

6. A general view emerged from the discussion that Council resolution 1296 (XLIV) had over the years served as a valid and useful framework for the consultative relationship between the Council and non-governmental organizations. Equally wide, however, was the feeling that resolution 1296 (XLIV), while technically comprehensive, had left itself open to conflicting interpretations, and that adjustments in and updating of this framework were needed to bring it into line with the changes that have taken place in the world at large, as well as within the United Nations, particularly in the last decade, and to make it generally more "non-governmental organization friendly".

The scope

7. While it was generally recognized that the scope of resolution 1296 (XLIV) did not encompass bodies other than the Council and its subsidiary machinery, and that this aspect needed to be addressed, views did not fully coincide on how broadly the net should be cast. On the one hand it was suggested that the range should be wide enough to cover bodies other than the Council dealing with economic, social and sustainable development, as well as bodies dealing with peace, security, disarmament, finance and humanitarian and human rights issues; on the other hand, the view was expressed that the scope should be defined by Article 71 of the Charter. It was suggested that the Council could make appropriate recommendations to the General Assembly for the involvement of non-governmental organizations in the latter's work and in its Main Committees and subsidiary bodies.

8. From another perspective, the need to encompass the full institutional, cultural, thematic and functional diversity that characterize non-governmental organizations was broadly recognized. The contributions of academic institutions, the private sector and the major groups identified in Agenda 21 would also need to be taken into account. To that end, appropriate definitions and innovative modalities (for example, hearings and panels) would need to be worked out.

Balance

9. There was general recognition of the need to strike a greater balance in the United Nations/non-governmental organization relationship between (i) the global, regional and national levels; (ii) national and international non-governmental organizations; (iii) non-governmental organizations from developing countries and other parts of the world; (iv) policy advice and programme implementation; and (v) participation in the preparatory phase of United Nations conferences, the conferences themselves and their implementation

phase. The various suggestions made to achieve those goals should be taken into account in the future work of the Working Group.

Non-governmental organization participation in United Nations conferences

10. The need for developing consistent and uniform rules and procedures for the participation of non-governmental organizations in United Nations conferences was stressed. Such rules should, however, take into account the need for flexibility and diversity. The model offered by the International Conference on Population and Development was generally perceived as the "best practice" thus far.

Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations

11. While it was generally recognized that the Committee had served as a valuable mechanism for regulating the consultative relationship, it was felt that the effectiveness of its functioning could be enhanced by increasing the frequency of its meetings and rationalizing and simplifying the procedures for the review of non-governmental organization applications and of the quadrennial reports. It was also suggested that the Committee's interaction with the substantive work of other intergovernmental bodies should be improved by giving it a broader mandate and enlarging its membership.

Categorization of non-governmental organizations

12. The present categories were generally considered as a useful basis to begin consideration of how best the changing needs of non-governmental organizations and the United Nations could be served without eroding acquired rights. In particular, the need to bring in national and specialized non-governmental organizations was recognized. Several suggestions were made regarding the possibility of establishing new categories by function and specialization, and by relationship to commissions. These will need to be examined further. There was a general feeling that even within the framework of existing categories, the involvement of non-governmental organizations in the activities of the United Nations should be improved.

Practical issues

13. A general call was made for improved practical arrangements on such matters as wide and timely dissemination of information on meetings, distribution of documentation, provision of access, and transparent, simple and non-bureaucratic procedures for the accreditation and participation of non-governmental organizations in United Nations meetings.

Funding for developing-country and transition-country non-governmental organizations

14. In order for non-governmental organizations from developing and transition countries meaningfully to be involved in the activities of the United Nations, there was broad recognition of the need to seek funding for their participation.

Secretariat support

15. There was a broad consensus on the need for enhanced secretariat support for the two-way relationship between the United Nations and non-governmental organizations. In this connection, broad support was expressed for strengthening the Non-Governmental Organization Unit and the Non-Governmental Liaison Service, and for improving the coordination between secretariat units dealing with non-governmental organizations.